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JOAQUIN,

ET AL.

(*From the Original Edition published at Oregon.*)

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1872.

(Miller)

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JOAQUIN,

ET AL.,

BY

CINCINNATUS H. MILLER.

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1872

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TO MAUD.

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JOAQUIN.

Shadows that shroud the to-morrow—
Glists from the life that's within—
Traces of pain and of sorrow.
And maybe a trace of sin—
Reachings for God in the darkness,
And for — what should have been.

Stains from the gall and the wormwood—
Dead Sea apples and myrrh—
Ghost of a soul by a hearthstone—
Blotches of heart's blood here,
But never the sound of a wailing—
Never the sign of a tear.

JOAQUIN.

Glintings of day in a darkness—
  Flashings of flint and of steel—
Blended in gossamer texture,
  The ideal and the real,
Limn'd like the phantom-ship-shadow,
  Crowding up under the keel.

I STAND beside the mobile sea,
  And sails are spread and sails are furled,
And ships go up and ships go down
In haste, like traders in a town,
And seem to see and beckon all.
Afar I see a white shape flee
With arms outstretched like ghost's to me,
Then slides down to the under-world.
Black masts—as if a winter's wind
Had shorn them bare of leaf and limb—
Are rising from the restless sea
So still and desolate and tall,
I almost see them gleam and shine

From clinging drops of dripping brine.
Broad still brown wings slide here and there,
Thin sea-blue wings wheel everywhere,
And white wings whistle through the air.
I hear a thousand sea-gulls call.

Behold the Ocean on the beach
Kneel lowly down as if in prayer.
I hear a moan as of despair,
While far at sea do toss, and reach
Somethings so like white pleading hands.
The Ocean's thin and hoary hair
Is trailed along the rolling sands,
At every sigh and sounding moan.
'Tis not a place for mirthfulness,
But meditation deep, and prayer,
And kneelings on the salted sod,
Where man must own his littleness
And know the mightiness of God.
The very birds shriek in distress
And sound the Ocean's monotone.

Dared I but say a prophecy,
As sang the holy men of old,
Of rock-built cities yet to be

Along these rolling sands of gold,
Crowding athirst into the sea,
What wondrous marvels might be told.
Enough, to know that empire here
Shall burn her loftiest, brightest star.
Here art and eloquence shall reign,
As o'er the wolf-reared realm of old;
Here learned and famous from afar
To pay their noble court shall come,
And shall not seek or see in vain,
But look on all with wonder dumb.

Afar the gleaming Sierras lie
Against a ground of bluest sky.
A long bent line of stainless white,
As if Diana's maid last night
Had in the liquid soft moonlight
Washed out her mistress' garments bright,
And on yon bent and swaying line
Hung all her linen out to dry.

I look along each gaping gorge—
I hear a thousand sounding strokes
Like brawny Vulcan at his forge,
Or giants rending giant oaks.

I see pick-axes flash and shine
And great wheels whirling in a mine.
Here winds a thick and yellow thread,
A mossed and silver stream instead;
And trout that leaped its rippled tide
Have turned upon their sides and died.
Lo! when the last pick in the mine
Is rusting red with idleness,
And rot yon cabins in the mold,
And wheels no more croak in distress,
And tall pines re-assert command,
Sweet bards along this sunset shore
Their mellow melodies will pour—
Will charm as charmers very wise—
Will strike the harp with master hand—
Will sound unto the vaulted skies
The valour of these men of old—
The mighty men of 'Forty-Nine—
Will sweetly sing and proudly say,
Long, long agone there was a day
When there were giants in the land.

II.

What rider rushes on the sight
Adown yon rocky long defile

Swift as an eagle in his flight—
Fierce as a winter's storm at night—
In terror born on Sierra's height,
Careening down some yawning gorge?
His face is flushed, his eye is wild,
And 'neath his courser's sounding feet—
A glance could barely be more fleet—
The rocks are flashing like a forge.
Such reckless rider! I do ween
No mortal man his like has seen.
And yet, but for his long serape
All flowing loose and black as crape,
And long silk locks of blackest hair
All streaming wildly in the breeze,
You might believe him in a chair,
Or chatting at some country Fair
With friend or senorita fair,
He rides so grandly at his ease.

But now he grasps a tighter rein—
A red rein wrought in golden chain—
And in his heavy stirrup stands—
Half turns and shakes a bloody hand
And hurls imaginary blows
And shouts defiance at his foes—

Now lifts his broad hat from his brow
As if to challenge fate, and now
His hand drops to his saddle-bow
And clutches something gleaming there
As if to something more than dare—
While checks the foe as quick as though
His own hand rested on each rein.
The stray winds lift the raven curls—
Soft as a fair Castilian girl's—
And press a brow so full and high,
Its every feature does belie
The thought, he is compelled to fly.
A brow as open as the sky,
On which you gaze and gaze again
As on a picture you have seen
That seems to hold a tale of woe—
Or wonder—you would seek to know.
A brow cut deep, as with a knife,
With many a dubious deed in life;
A brow of blended pride and pain,
And yearnings for what should have been.

He grasps his gilded gory rein,
And wheeling like a hurricane,
Defying flood, or stone, or wood,

Is dashing down the gorge again.
O never yet has prouder steed
Borne master nobler in his need.
There is a glory in his eye
That seems to dare, and to defy
Pursuit, or time, or space, or race.
His body is the type of speed,
While from his nostril to his heel
Are muscles as if made of steel.
He is not black, nor gray, nor white,
But 'neath that broad serape of night,
And locks of darkness streaming o'er,
His sleek sides seem a fiery red,
Though maybe red with gore.
What crimes have made that red hand red?
What wrongs have written that young face
With lines of thought so out of place?
Where flies he? And from where has fled?
And what his lineage and race?
What glitters in his heavy belt
And from his furred catenas gleam?
What on his bosom that doth seem
A diamond bright or dagger's hilt?
The iron hoofs that still resound
Like thunder from the yielding ground

Alone reply; and now the plain,
Quick as you breathe and gaze again,
Is won. Pursuit is baffled and in vain.

III.

I stand upon a stony rim.
A rock-lipped cannon plunging south
Yawns deep and darkling at my feet;
So deep, so distant and so dim
Its recess winds, a yellow thread,
And calls so faintly and so far,
I turn aside my swooning head
As from a mighty yawning mouth
Of earth that opens into hell.
I feel a fierce impulse to leap
Adown the beetling precipice
Like some lone, lost, uncertain star—
To plunge into a place unknown
And win a world all, all my own;
Or if I might not meet such bliss,
At least escape the curse of this

I gaze again. A gleaming star
Shines back as from some mossy well
Reflected from blue fields afar.

Brown hawks are wheeling here and there,
And up and down the broken wall
Cling clumps of dark green chaparral.
While from the rent rocks, gray and bare,
Blue junipers hang in the air.
Then crowding to the yellow stream,
Low cabins nestle as in fear
Among the boulders mossed and brown
That time and storms have tumbled down
From towers undefiled by man,
And look no taller than a span.
From low and shapeless chimneys rise
Some tall straight columns of blue smoke,
And weld them to the bluer skies;
While sounding down the silent gorge,
I hear the steady pick-axe stroke,
As if upon a flashing forge.

Another scene, another sound.
Sharp shots are fretting through the air,
Red knives are flashing everywhere,
And here and there the yellow flood
Is purpled with warm smoking blood.
The brown hawk swoops low to the ground,
And nimble chip-munks, small and still,

Dart striped lines across the sill
That lordly feet shall press no more.
The flume lies warping in the sun,
The pan sits empty by the door,
The pick-axe on its bed-rock floor
Lies rusting in the silent mine.
There comes no single sound or sign
Of life, besides yon munks in brown
That dart their dim shapes up and down
The rocks that swelter in the sun;
But darting round yon rocky spur
Where scarce a hawk would dare to whir,
Fly horsemen reckless in their flight.
One wears a flowing black capote,
While down the cape doth flow and float
Long locks of hair as dark as night,
And hands are red that erst were white.

* * * * *

I look along the valley's edge,
Where curves the white road like a surge
Along a sea of sage, and hedge
Of black and brittle chaparral,
And enters like an iron wedge
Drove deep into yon rocky gorge

As if to split the hills in twain.
Two clouds of dust roll o'er the plain,
And men ride up and men ride down,
And hot men halt and curse and shout,
And coming coursers plunge and neigh.
The clouds of dust are rolled in one,
And horses, horsemen, where are they?
Lo! through a rift of dust and dun —
Of desolation and of route —
I see some long white daggers flash —
I hear the sharp hot pistols crash,
And curses loud in mad despair
Are blended with a plaintive prayer
That struggles through the dust and air.

The cloud is lifting like a veil.
The frantic curse, the plaintive wail,
Have died away; nor sound or word
Along the dusty plain is heard
Save sounding of yon courser's feet
That flies so fearfully and fleet,
With gory girth and broken rein,
Across the hot and trackless plain.
Behold him, as he trembling flies,
Look back with red and bursting eyes

To where his gory master lies.
The cloud is lifting like a veil,
But underneath its drifting sail
I see a loose and black serape
Far float and fly in careless heed,
So vulture-like above a steed
Of perfect mould and passing speed.

Here lies a man of giant mould,
His mighty right arm perfect bare—
Except its sable coat of hair—
Is clutching in its iron clasp
A clump of sage, as if to hold
The earth from slipping from his grasp;
While stealing from his brow a stain
Of purple blood and gory brain
Yields to the parched lips of the plain,
Swift to resolve to dust again.
Here lies a youth whose fair face is
Still holy from a mother's kiss;
While friend and foe blend here and there
With dusty lips and trailing hair;
Some with a cold and sullen stare—
Some with their red hands bent in prayer.

IV.

The sun is red and flushed and dry,
And fretted from his weary beat
Across the hot and desert sky,
And swollen as from overheat,
And failing too, for, see, he sinks
Swift as a ball of burnished ore.
It may be fancy, but methinks
He never fell so fast before.

I hear the neighing of hot steeds —
I see the marshalling of men
That silent move among the trees
With step and stealthiness profound,
On carpetings of spindled weeds,
Without a syllable or sound
Save clashing of their burnished arms
Clinking sepulchral alarms —
Grim bearded men and brawny men
That grope among the ghostly trees.
Were ever silent men as these?
Was ever sombre forest deep
And dark as this? Here dreamy sleep
Might wrap the lids a thousand years,
Nor wake nor weep for sun or sound.

A stone's throw to the right, a rock
Has reared his head among the stars—
An island in the bluer deep—
And on his front a thousand scars
Of thunder's crash and earthquake's shock
Are seamed, as if by sabre stroke
Of gods, enraged that he should rear
His front amid their realms of air.

What moves along his beetling brow,
So small, so indistinct and far,
This side yon blazing evening star,
Seen through that redwood's shifting bough?
A lookout on the world below?
A watcher for the friend—or foe?
This still troop's sentry it must be.
Yet seems no taller than my knee.

But for the grandeur of this gloom,
And for the chafing steeds' alarms,
And brown men's sullen clash of arms,
This were but as a living tomb.
These weeds are spindled, pale and white,
As if nor sunshine, life or light
Had ever reached this forest's heart.

Above, the redwood boughs entwine
Thick as a copse of tangled vine;
Above, so fearfully afar,
It seems as 'twere a second sky—
A sky without a moon or star,
The mossed boughs are so thick and high.
At every lisp of leaf I start!
Would I could hear a cricket trill,
Or that yon sentry from his hill
Might shout or show some sign of life,
The place doth seem so deathly still.
'Mount ye, and forward for the strife,'
Who by yon dark trunk sullen stands,
With black serape and flowing hair,
And coldly gives his brief commands?

They mount—away.—Quick on his heel
He turns, and grasps his gleaming steel,
Then sadly smiles, and stoops to kiss
An upturned face so sweetly fair—
So sadly, saintly, purely fair—
So rich of blessedness and bliss,
I know she is not flesh and blood,
But some sweet spirit of this wood.
I know it by her wealth of hair,

And step on the unyielding air—
Her seamless robe of shining white,
Her soul-deep eyes of darkest night;
But over all and more than all
That could be said or can befall—
That tongue can tell or pen can trace,
That wondrous witchery of face.

Among the trees I see him stride
To where a red steed fretting stands
Impatient for his lord's commands;
And she glides noiseless at his side,
And not a bud, or leaf, or stem,
The way she went, is broke or bent;
They only nodded as she stepped,
And all their grace and freshness kept,
And now will bloom
As though fresh risen from a tomb,
For fairest sun has shone on them.

'The world is mantling black again.
Beneath us, o'er the sleeping plain,
Dull steel gray clouds slide up and down
As if the earth still wore a frown.
The west is red with sunlight slain.'

(One hand toys with her waving hair,
Soft lifting from her shoulders bare;
The other holds the loosened rein,
And rests upon the swelling mane
That curls the curved neck o'er and o'er
Like waves that swirl along the shore.
He hears the last retreating sound
Of iron on volcanic stone,
That echoes far from peak to plain,
And 'neath the thick wood's darkened zone
He peers the rugged Sierras down.)
'But darker yet shall be the frown,
And redder yet shall be the flame.
And yet I would that it were not—
That all forgiven or forgot,
Of curses deep and awful crimes,
Of blood and terror, could but seem
Some troubled and unholy dream—
That even now I could awake,
And waking, find me once again,
With hand and heart without a stain.
Swift gliding o'er that sunny lake,
Begirt with town and castle wall,
Where first I seen the silver light—
Begirt with blossoms, and the bloom

Of orange; sweet with the perfume
Of cactus, pomegranate, and all
The thousand sweets of tropic climes—
And waking, see the mellow moon
Poured out in gorgeous plenilune
On silver ripples of that tide—
And waking, hear soft music pour
Along that flora-formèd shore—
And waking, find you at my side—
My father's mossed and massive halls—
My brothers in their strength and pride.'
(His hand forsakes her raven hair,
His eyes have an unearthly glare.
She shrinks and shudders at his side,
Then lifts to his her moistened eye,
And only looks her sad reply.
A sullenness his soul enthralls—
A silence born of hate and pride.
His fierce volcanic heart, so deep,
Is stirred; his teeth, despite his will,
Do chatter as if in a chill.
His very dagger at his side
Does shake and rattle in its sheath
Like blades of brown grass in a gale
Do rustle on the frosted heath,

And yet he does not bend or weep.)

'I did not vow a girlish vow,
Nor idle imprecation now
Will I bestow by boasting word.
Feats of the tongue become the knave.
A wailing in the land is heard
For those that will not come again;
And weeping for the rashly brave,
Who sleep in many a gulch and glen,
Has wet a hundred hearths with tears,
And darkened them for years and years.
I would their tears were clotted gore,
And every hearth as cold as one
Is now upon that sweet lake shore,
Where my dear kindred dwelt of yore—
Where now is but an ashen heap,
And mass of mossy earth and stone—
Where round the altar black wolves keep
Their carnival and doleful moan—
Where hornèd lizards dart and climb,
And molluscs slide and leave their slime.
But tremble not. This night alone
Shall see my vengeance fully done;
And ere the day-star gleams again

My horse's hoofs shall spurn the dead—
The yet warm reeking dead of those
Of that coarse, cold, inhuman race,
With snake-like eyes and leprous face,
That wrought us all our deadly woes.
While all my glad returning way
Shall be as light as living day,
From towns and campos burning red.
They say they seek me! seek Joaquin!
That they have sought me far and wide!
Ha! Oftener this hand I ween
My boasting foes have felt and seen
Of late, than suits their spleen or pride.
Too well they know, nor day nor night,
But with the least of search or care
They all could find him if they dare
But they, pale boasters of the fight,
Shall deem him never half so near,
Or warm friend never half so dear,
To them as I shall be to-night.
And yet I know I go to meet
Full twice the numbers I have here.
I would their numbers treble were,
My vengeance would be more complete.

'And then! And then, my peri pearl,—
(As if to charm her from her fears
And drive away the starting tears,
Again his small hand seeks a curl
And voice forgets its sullen tone,
And eye forsakes its lofty scorn,—)
Away to where the orange-tree
Is white through all the cycled years,
And love lives an eternity—
Where birds are never out of tune
And life knows no decline of noon—
Where climes are sweet as woman's breath,
And purpled, dreamy, mellow skies
Are lovely as a woman's eyes.
There, we in calm and perfect bliss
Of boundless faith and sweet delight
Will realise the world above,
Forgetting all the wrongs of this,
Forgetting all of blood and death,
And all your terrors of to-night
In pure devotión and deep love.'

As gently as a mother bows
Her first-born sleeping babe above
The cherished cherub lips to kiss,

He bends to her his stately head.
I do not heed the hallowed kiss—
I do not hear the hurried vows
Of passion, faith, unfailing love—
I do not mark the prisoned sigh—
I do not meet the moistened eye.
A low, sweet melody is heard
Like cooing of some Orient bird,
So fine it does not touch the air—
So faint it stirs not anywhere.
Faint as the falling of the dew;
Low as a pure unuttered prayer;
The meeting—mingling, as it were,
Of souls in paradisial bliss.

Erect, again he grasps the rein
So tight, as to the seat he springs
The horse doth on his haunches poise
And beat the air with iron feet,
And curve his noble, glossy neck,
And toss on high his swelling mane—
And leap—away—he spurns the rein
And flies so fearfully and fleet,
But for the hot hoofs' ringing noise,
'Twould seem as if he was on wings.

And she is gone—gone like a breath,
Gone like a white sail seen at night,
A moment and then lost to sight—
Gone like a star you look upon
That glimmers to a bead—a speck,
Then softly melts into the dawn,
And all is still as death.
Where has that passing glory gone?
That coal-black curling cloud of hair?
The dark woods answering, echo, where?

V.

She stands upon the wild watch-tower
And with her own hand feeds the flame—
The beacon light to guide again
His coming from the battle plain.
'Tis wearing past the midnight hour,
The latest that he ever came,
Yet silence reigns around the tower.
'Tis hours past the midnight hour,
She calls, she looks, she lists in vain
For sight or sound from peak or plain.
She moves along the beetling tower—
She stoops, her ear low to the ground,
In hope to catch the welcome sound

Of iron on the rugged stone.
In vain she peers down in the night,
But for one feeble flash of light
From flinty stone and feet of steel.
She stands upon the fearful rim,
Where even coolest head would reel,
And fearless leans her form far o'er
Its edge, and lifts her hands to him,
And calls in words as sweetly wild,
As bleeding saint or sorrowing child;
She looks, she lists, she leans in vain,
In vain his dalliance does deplore;
She turns her to the light again,
And bids the watchman to the plain,
Defying night or dubious way,
To guide the flight or join the fray,
And she is watching all alone.

The day-star dances on the snow
That gleams along the Sierra's crown,
In gorgeous everlasting glow
And frozen glory and renown.
Yet still she feeds the beacon flame,
And lists, and looks, and leans in vain.

The day has dawned. She still is there!
Yet in her sad and silent air
I read the stillness of despair.
Why burns the red light on the tower
So brightly at this useless hour?
But see! The day-king hurls a dart
At darkness, and his cold black heart
Is pierced, and he, compelled to flee,
Flies to his caverns in the sea.
And now, behold, she radiant stands,
And lifts her thin white jewelled hands
Unto the broad, unfolding sun,
And hails him Tonatiu and King,
With hallowed mien and holy prayer.
Her fingers o'er some symbols run,
Her knees are bowed in worshipping
Her God—beheld when thine is not—
In form and faith long, long forgot.

Again she lifts her white arms bare
That gleam with jewels rich and rare.
Was ever mortal half so fair?
Was ever such a wealth of hair?
Was ever such a plaintive air?
Was ever such a sweet despair?

Still humbler now her form she bends—
Still higher now the flame ascends,
She bares her bosom to the sun.
Again her jewelled fingers run
In signs, and sacred form and prayer.
She bows with awe and holy air
In lowly worship to the sun,
Then rising, calls her lover's name,
And leaps into the leaping flame.
I do not hear the faintest moan,
Or sound, or syllable, or tone.
The red flames stoop a moment down
As if to raise her from the ground;
Then stand up, tall, tiptoed, as one
Would hand a soul up to the sun.

VI.

Eternal Popocatapetl!
Isolated and apart
In the untrod desert's heart;
Grandly, grimly, and alone
He stands a burning mono-stone.
Unceasing as the numian shrine,
Afar his red lips glow and shine,
And typify the flames of hell.

Who in the under-world unknown
For ever feed this awful flame,
And make this mount their altar-stone?
Who but the Montezumas gone,
Kings of the children of the sun?
Last of a thousand ruined shrines!
Look round you where the cactus twines
His yellow roots through thin green sods
That grow above the marble hewn
Thick with their chronicles unread,
And deeds of their great forgotten dead.
On columns o'er white deserts strewn—
On cities where the hearth appears
Rent by roots of a thousand years;
Yet this one altar, this alone
Of all the relics that are known
Of the faithful children of the sun
Burns to their strange forgotten gods.
And this one lone eternal flame,
Which robber's knife,
Nor red castile,
Nor civil strife,
Nor Hapsburg steel,
Nor time, nor tyranny can tame,
Shall burn when all but time are not—

When even their names shall be forgot.

O Italy of the Occident!
Land of flowers and summer climes—
Of holy priests and horrid crimes;
Land of the cactus and sweet cocoa,
Richer than all the Orient
In gold and glory—in want and woe—
In self-denial—in days misspent—
In truth and treason—in good and guilt—
In ivied ruins and altars low—
In battered walls and blood misspilt,
Glorious, gory Mexico!

* * * *

* * * *

I look far down a dewy vale
Where cool palms lean along a brook
As crooked as a shepherd's crook.
Red parrots call from orange-trees,
Whose white lips kiss the idle breeze,
And murmur with the hum of bees—
The gray dove cooes his low love-tale.
With cross outstretched like pleading hands

That mutely plead the faith of Christ,
Amid the palms a low church stands.
I would that man might learn from these
The priceless victories of peace,
And deem strife but a deadly vice.

I see black clouds of troops afar
Sweep like a surge that sweeps the shore,
And checkering all the green hills o'er
Are battlements and signs of war.

I hear the hoarse-voiced cannon roar—
The red-mouthed orators of war—
Plead as they never plead before;
While outdone thunder stops his car
And leans in wonderment afar.
A Hapsburg king has crossed the main
And Gaul and Aztec strew the plain.
God will not look upon the scene,
But sorrowing spreads a sombre screen
Of smoke o'er those that battle there,
And leaves them to death and despair.

A fragment from the battle broke
Forsakes the sullen dun of smoke

And winds it painfully and slow
Amid the cool and peaceful palms
To where yon gray church open stands,
As if it bore a load of woe.
Currajo! 'tis a chief they bear!
And by his black and flowing hair
Methinks I have seen him before.
A black priest guides them through the door—
They lay him bleeding on the floor.

He moves, he lifts his feeble hand
And points with tried and trenchèd brand,
And bids them to the battle plain.
They turn—they pause—he bids again—
They turn a last time to their chief,
And gaze in silence and deep pain,
For silence speaks the deepest grief.
They clutch their blades—they turn—are gone,
And priest and chief are left alone.

'And here it ends. Here all is not.
I am content. 'Tis what I sought.
There is nor price, nor ban, nor power,
Nor plea, nor place, nor woman's smile
That could my weary soul beguile,

Or keep it from repose an hour.
Yet even had I ties on earth,
I know not why I should deplore
To die e'en at this age and hour,
Since I have seen and suffered more
Than they who live a full threescore;
And sorrow is the sum of life,
And I began it at my birth.
And I have known, I know not why,
Through all my dubious days of strife,
That when we live our deeds we die—
That man may in one hour live
All that his life can bear or give.
This I have done, and do not grieve;
For I am older by a score
Then many born long, long before,
If sorrows be the sum of life.

'Aye! I am old—old as the years
Could brand me with their blood and tears,
For with my fingers I can trace
Grief's trenches on my hollow face,
And through my thin frame I can feel
The pulses of my frozen heart
Beat with a dull uncertain start.

And mirrored in my sword to-day,
Before its edge of gleaming steel
Had lost its lustre in the fray,
I seen around my temples stray
Thin, straggling locks of steely gray.

'O for the rest!—for the rest eternal!
O for the deep and the dreamless sleep!
Where never a hope lures to deceive!
Where never a heart beats but to grieve;
Nor thoughts of heaven or hells infernal
Shall even wake or dare to break
The rest of an everlasting sleep!
Time has not set his seal on you—
Not one dark hair has lost its hue;
Yet I, indeed, might be your son,
In years—but not in actions done.
But what is time? and what are years
In reckoning of age and life?
'Tis measured by the deeds of strife—
And passions—hate—and love—and tears.

* * * *

'She was the last—last of her kind—
Last of a race of gods and kings—

Last of the Montezumas' line
That dwelt up in the yellow sun ;
But sorrowing for man's despair,
Slid by his trailing, yellow hair
To earth, to rule with love and bring
The blessedness of peace to man.
She was the last—last earthly one
Of the eternal children of the sun—
A sweet perfume still lingering
In essence pure, and living on
In blessedness about the spot
When rose, and bush, and bloom were not.

'Beside Tezcuco's flowery shore
Where waves were washing evermore
The massive columns of the wall,
Stood Montezumas' mighty hall.
And here the Montezumas reigned
In perfect peace and love unfeigned,
Until from underneath the sea—
Where all sin is, or ought to be—
Came men of death and strange device,
Who taught a strange and mystic faith
Of crucifixion and of Christ—
More hated than the plague or death.

Nay do not swing your cross o'er me—
You crossed you once, but do not twice,
Nor dare repeat the name of Christ—
Nor start—not think to fly—nor frown,
While you the stole and surplice wear,
For I do clutch your sable gown,
And you shall hear my curse—or prayer,
And be my priest in my despair;
Since neither priest, or sign, or shrine,
Is left in all the land, of mine.

'Enough! We know, alas! too well
How Christ has ruled—Tonatiu fell.
The black wolf in our ancient halls
Unfrightened sleeps the live-long day.
The stout roots burst our mossy walls,
And in the moonlight wild dogs play
Around the plaza overgrown
Where nude boars hold their carnivals.
The moss is on our altar-stone,
The mould on Montezumas' throne,
And symbols in the desert strown.

'And when your persecutions ceased
From troop, and king, and cowlèd priest,

That we had felt for centuries—
(Ah, know you priest that cross of thine
Is but death's symbol; and the sign
Of blood and butchery and tears?)—
Returned again the faithful few,
Beside Tezcuco's sacred shore
To build their broken shrines anew,
They numbered scarce a broken score.
Here dwelt my father—here she dwelt:
Here kept one altar burning bright—
Last of the thousands that had shone
Along yon mountain's brow of stone—
Last of a thousand stars of night.
To Tonatiu Ytzaqual we knelt.
Nay, do not start, nor shape the sign
Of horror at this creed of mine,
Nor call again the name of Christ.
You cross you once, you cross you twice—
I warn you do not cross you thrice.
Nor will I brook a sign or look
Of anger at the faith she felt.
I am no creedist. Faith to me
Is but a name for mystery.
I only know this faith was hers,
I care to know no more to be

The truest of its worshippers.

'But useless that I do prolong
The tale of tyranny and wrong,
Well known to you as 'tis to me.
The Saxon came across the sea
With gory blade and brand of flame.
I know not that he knew or cared
What was our race, or creed, or name;
I only know the Paynim dared
Assault and sack for sake of gain
Of sacred vessels wrought in gold
The temple where gods dwelt of old;
And that my father, brothers, dared
Defend their shrines, and all were slain.

'Full well we knew that we must fall
When first the rude assault was made.
"It is not well we perish all,
Fly, fly you with the holy maid.
A boat chafes at the causeway side,
Your youthful arm is useless here,"
My noble father to me cried.
I fled; was it the flight of fear?
O how I chafed to join the fray!

But I had been taught to obey;
We gained the boat—sprang in—away
We dashed along the dimpled tide.
It must have been they thought we bore
The treasure in our sudden flight,
For in an instant from the shore
An hundred crafts were making chase,
And as their sharp prows drew apace
I caught my carbine to my face.
She, rising, dashed it quick aside;
And when their hands were stretched to clasp
The boat's prow in their eager grasp,
She turned to me, and sudden cried,
"Come, come," and plunged into the tide.
I plunged into the dimpled wave,
I had no thought but 'twas my grave;
But faith had never follower
More true than I to follow her.
On through the purple wave she cleaves,
As darts a sunbeam through the leaves.
At last—what miracle was there?—
Again we breathed the welcome air,
And resting by the rising tide,
The secret outlet of the lake,
Safe hid by trackless fern and brake,

With yellow lilies at our side,
She told me how in ages gone
Her fathers built with sacred stone
This secret way beneath the tide,
That now was known to her alone.

'When night came on and all was still,
And stole the white moon down the hill,
Soft, as if she too feared some ill,
Again I sought the sacred halls
And on the curving causeway stood.
I looked—naught but the blackened walls
And charred bones of my kindred blood
Was left beside the dimpled flood.

'We fled, and swiftly fled—and far
Toward the frozen polar star
Where Sierra's white locks float and flow
In sheen of everlasting snow—
Where meek-eyed violets in blue
Were shining in the beaded dew,
And yellow blooms were bursting through
The very crust of dripping snow.

* * * *

'There is one thing I would forget,
One theme I would not dwell upon;
A skeleton for ever set
Beside my desolate hearthstone—
A wrong to her so deep and base—
A deed so terrible and damned
That even you would hide your face
In shame to bear the shape of man,
Should you but guess its black disgrace.

'My arm was nerved—my soul was fire,
I vented full the darkest ire.
This steel has known no maiden stain
To-day on yonder battle plain,
A marvel if my northern slain
Outnumbered not those of to-day
That dead and dying yonder lay.

'My vengeance was complete; but she,
Too sainted, beautiful, and pure,
To stay on earth and still endure
The dark stain and deep treachery,
Returned back to the yellow sun.

'I had enough of death and blood,

I might, of life too, say the same,
Since life and death, and good and ill,
Had neither choice, or charm, or name,
But all alike to me were one.
I roamed o'er many a realm since then
In sullen loneliness of thought,
And inly smiled to talk to men
Who boasted they had ofttimes seen
The trunkless head of dread Joaquin.
But when I learned a stranger sought
To sit on Montezuma's throne
That had in justice been my own,
And make your cross the nation's creed,
As did the Castile kings of old,
My cold heart beat no longer cold.
To tell the rest is little need—
And little time left to reveal—
My eyes are dim—my senses reel—
Enough! Mine was no tempered steel
To-day upon the sulphurous field,
As many trenched heads yonder feel,
And many felt, that feel no more,
That fought beneath your cross and sign,
And falling, vainly called on Christ—
You black monk! dare you cross you thrice?

When I have warned you twice before,
And swing your cursed cross o'er and o'er,
But for which she had been my bride
And sat a princess at my side?
To you and your damned faith I owe
My heritage of crime and woe;
You shall not live to mock me more
If there be temper in this brand,
Or nerve left in this bloody hand—
I start, I leave this stony ground,
Despite of blood or mortal wound,
Or darkness that has dimmed the eye,
Or senses that do dance and reel—
I clutch a throat—I clench a steel—
I thrust—I fail—I fall—I die—'

VII.

The tinkle of bells on the blended hills,
The hum of bees in the orange-trees
And the lowly call of the beaded rills,
Are heard in the land as I look again
Over the peaceful battle-plain.
For murderous man from the field has fled
As if he feared the face of his dead.
He bled—he battled—he ruled a day,

And peaceful nature resumed her sway.
But the sward where yonder corses lay,
When the verdant season shall come again
Shall greener grow than it grew before;
Taking its freshness back once more
From they that despoiled it yesterday.

Death has been in at the low church door,
For his foot-prints lie on the stony floor.
There are raven locks of flowing hair;
The stole and the surplice too are there;
And I have seen them all before.
A cross is clasped in one right hand,
And one is clutching a blood-red brand,
And all are silent, and thick with gore.

* * * *

The door is wide, the sill unpressed
By saint, or Sadducee, or priest—
By friend or foe, or host or guest.
The black bats cling about the wall,
And from the cross that leans afar
The gaunt, ungainly vultures call
Like wolves that prowl and howl in war.
The spiders' web, and dust within

Usurp the altar and the shrine,
And all the holy things therein
Save but the cross, and Christ divine;
There spiders weave a circle lace
For ever round the holy face.
The peons pass that way no more
Except in bands, quick, stepping light,
For white bones rattle in the aisle
And hot blood smokes along the floor.
While all the night a priest in white
That watches in the open door,
Will cross him once, and twice, and thrice,
And wailing call the name of Christ?
Then cross again; and all the while
The white bones rattle in the aisle.
While ever at the noon of day
There rises from the gory floor
A loose capote and cloud of hair,
All darker than a thunder-storm,
Enveloping a sullen form
That looks a weary, sad despair.
One worships Christ by night, and one
By day is worshipping the sun.

WAIFS.

Argosies swirled,
Once precious to me,
Now cast on the world
Like waifs from the sea.

IS IT WORTH WHILE?

IS it worth while that we jostle a brother
  Bearing his load on the rough road of life?
Is it worth while that we jeer at each other
  In blackness of heart?—that we war to the knife?
  God pity us all in our pitiful strife.

God pity us all as we jostle each other;
  God pardon us all for the triumphs we feel
When a fellow goes down 'neath his load on the heather,
  Pierced to the heart: words are keener than steel,
  And mightier far for woe or for weal.

Were it not well in this brief little journey
  Over the isthmus down into the tide,
We give him a fish instead of a serpent,
  Ere folding the hands to be and abide
  For ever and aye in dust at his side?

Look at the roses saluting each other;
  Look at the herds all at peace on the plain—
Man, and man only, makes war on his brother,
  And dotes in his heart on his peril and pain—
  Shamed by the brutes that go down on the plain.

Is it worth while we should in the dust humble
  Our fellows with whispers of guile and mistrust?
God pity us all! Time eft-soon will tumble
  All of us together like leaves in a gust,
  Humbled indeed, down into the dust.

Why should we envy a moment of pleasure
  Some poor fellow-mortal has wrung from it all?
Oh! could you look into his life's broken measure—
  Look at the dregs—at the wormwood and gall—
  Look at his heart hung with crape like a pall—

Look at the skeletons down by his hearthstone—
  Look at his cares in their merciless sway,
I know you would go and say tenderly, lowly,
  Brother—my brother, for aye and for aye,
  Lo! Lethe is washing the blackness away.

ZANARA.

NO! It was not well, Zanara,
While the fever held its riot—
When the doctors bid be quiet—
That you came to my bed-side
In the middle of the night,
With your two hands on your heart—
That you pressed on my bed-side
In the absence of my bride,
And so pressed upon your heart
That the blood all thick and blackened.
When your long white fingers slackened,
Oozed betwen them to the floor.
Oh! This mouldy, gory floor!

Then your linen it was moulded,
And streaked yellow where it folded,
And your bosom it was bare,
Which you know was nothing fair
In the absence of my bride,

Then your heavy, slimy hair,
Creeping, clinging round your bosom—
Clammy bosom, blue and bare,
Which you did not try to hide.

Then your eyes had such a glare,
And the smell of death was there,
And the spirits that were with you
Whistled through the mossy door,
And they danced upon my bosom,
And they tangled up my hair,
And made crosses on the floor.
No! All this was nothing fair
While the fever held its riot—
When the doctors bid be quiet.

It was not my fault, remember,
All this life of black disasters—
All this life of dark December—
All this heart-sickness and sadness,
Though we both did have our masters,
Yours was Love and mine Ambition—
Mine is driving me to—madness,
Yours has drove you to perdition.

But some time, if you so will it,
When this hot brain is less rabid—
When our masters both are sleeping—
When the storm the stars is keeping,
Leave the darkness where they laid you—
Leave the dampness you inhabit—
Leave that yellow, moulded linen—
That dull, sullen, frozen stare,
And the cold death in your hair;
Then I will no more upbraid you.
I will meet you just one minute
By the oak-tree, you remember,
With the grape-vine tangled in it—
Meet you, while my bride is sleeping—
While the storm the stars is keeping.
I will press your bosom gory—
I will tell you one sweet story,
With sweet balm and healing in it.
But remember, now remember,
I can stay there but one minute.

IN EXILE.

ALONE on this desolate border—
On this ruggedest, rim'd frontier.
Where the hills huddle up in disorder
Like a fold in mortal fear—
Where the mountains are out at the elbow,
And their yellow coats seedy and sere—
Where the river runs sullen and yellow
This dismallest day of the year.

I go up and go down on the granite,
Like an unholy ghost under bans.
Oh, Christ! for the eloquent quiet!
For the final folding of hands!
What am I? Where am I going?
I look at the lizard that glides
Over the mossy boulder
With green epaulets on his sides.

My feet are in dust to the ankles,
  My heart, it is dustier still;
Will never the dust be levelled
  Till the heart is laid under the hill?
Why this yearning and longing?
  This dull desolation and void?
Pussy cat seeking a corner?
  Alone! yet for ever annoyed?

I look at the sun shining over,
  A cloud is swinging on hinges
And is trying his glory to cover.
  But see! his beams in the fringes
Are tangled and fastened in falling,
And a sailor above us is calling,
  'Untangle the ravels and fringes.'

In grim battle lines above us
Gray, oarless ships are wheeling—
A flash—a crash appalling—
A hurling of red-hot spears—
Hark to the thunder calling
In fierce infernal chorus.
Now silver sails are falling
Like silver sheens before us.

What Nelson to fame aspires
In the chartless bluer deep
Where navies and armies track?
Lo! I have seen their fires
At night as they bivouac;
And they battle, and bleed, and weep,
For this rain is warm as tears.

Oh! why was I ever a dreamer?
  Better a brute on the plain,
Or one who believes his redeemer
  Is greed, and gold, and gain,
Or one who can riot and revel,
  Than be pierced with intolerable pain
Of poesy darling, in travail,
  That will not be born from the brain.

O bride by the breathing ocean
  With lustrous and brimming eye,
Pour out the Lethean potion
  Till a lustrum rolleth by,
Lulling a soul's commotion,
  Plashing against the sky—
Calming a living spectre
  With its two hands tossed on high.

Are sea winds mild and mellow
  Where my sun-browned babies are,
A-weaving silk and yellow
  Seamed sunbeams in their hair?

Go on and on in disorder
  O cloud with the silver rim,
While tangled up in your border
  The glinting sunbeams swim.

TO THE BARDS OF S. F. BAY.

I AM as one unlearned, uncouth,
From country come to join the youth
Of some sweet town in quest of truth;
A skilless northern Nazarene—
From whence no good can ever come.
I stand apart as one that's dumb.
I hope—I fear—I hasten home.
I plunge into my wilds again.

I catch your dulcet symphonies,
I drink the low sweet melodies
That stream through these dark feathered trees
Like echoes from some far church-bell,
Or music on the water spilled
Beneath the still moon's holy spell,
And life is sweeter—all is well—
The soul is fed. The heart is filled.

I move among these frowning firs,
Black bats wheel by in rippled whirs,

While naught else living breathes or stirs.
  I peep—I lift the boughs apart—
I tiptoe up—I try to rise—
I strive to gaze into the eyes
Of charmers charming thus so wise—
  I coin your faces on my heart.

I greet you on your brown bent hills
Discoursing with the beaded rills,
While over all the full moon spills
  His flood in gorgeous plenilune.
White skilful hands sweep o'er the strings,
I heed as when a seraph sings,
I lean to catch the whisperings,
  I list into the night's sweet noon.

I see you by the streaming strand,
A singing sea-shell in each hand,
And silk locks tossing as you stand,
  And tangled in the toying breeze.
And lo! the sea with salty tears,
While white hands toss, then disappear,
Doth plead that you for years and years
  Will stay and sing unto the seas.

MERINDA.

AND this then is all of the sweet life she promised!
And this then is all of the fair life I painted!
Dead, ashen fruit, of the dark Dead Sea border!
Ah yes, and worse by a thousand numbers,
Since that can be cast away at willing,
While desolate life with its dead hope buried
Clings on to the clay, though the soul despise it.

Back, backward, to-night, is memory traversing,
Over the desert my weary feet travelled—
Thick with the wrecks of my dear heart-idols—
And toppling columns of my ambition—
Red with the best of my hot heart's purple.

Down under the hill and under the fir-tree,
By the spring, and looking far out in the valley,
She stands as she stood in the glorious Olden,
Swinging her hat in her right hand dimpled.
The other hand toys with a honey-suckle

That has tiptoed up and tried to kiss her.
Her dark hair is twining her neck and her temples
Like tendrils some beautiful Parian marble.

'O eyes of lustre and love and passion!
O radiant face with the sea-shell tinted!
White cloud with the sunbeams tangled in it!'
I cried, as I stood in the dust beneath her,
And gazed on the God my boy-heart worshipped
With a love and a passion a part of madness.
'Dreamer,' she said, and a tinge of displeasure
Swept over her face that I should disturb her,
'All of the fair world is spread out before you;
Go down and possess it, with love and devotion,
And heart ever tender and touching as woman's,
And life shall be sweet as the first kiss of morning.'

I turned down the pathway, blinded no longer;
Another was coming, tall, manly, and bearded.
I built me a shrine in the innermost temple—
In the innermost rim of the red pulsing heart
And placed her therein, sole possessor and priestess,
And carved all her words on the walls of my heart.

They say that he wooed her there under the fir-tree

And won her one eve, when the katydids mocked her.
Well, he may have a maiden and call her Merinda;
But mine is the one that stands there for ever
Leisurely swinging her hat by the ribbons.

They say she is wedded. No, not my Merinda,
For mine stands for ever there under the fir-tree
Gazing and swinging her hat by the ribbons.
They tell me her children reach up to my shoulder.
'Tis false. I did see her down under the fir-tree
When the stars were all busy a-weaving thin laces
Out of their gold and the moon's yellow tresses,
Swinging her hat as in days of the Olden.
True, I didn't speak to or venture to touch her—
Touch her! I sooner would pluck the sweet Mary,
The mother of Jesus, from arms of the priesthood
As they kneel at the altar in holy devotion.

* * * *

And was it for this that my heart was kept tender?
Fashioned from thine, O sacristan maiden!—
That coarse men could pierce my warm heart to the purple?
That vandals could enter and burn out its freshness?
That rude men could trample it into the ashes?

O was it for this that my heart was kept open?
I looked in a glass, not the heart of man-mortal.
Whose was the white soul I seen there reflecting?
But trample the grape that the wine may flow freely!

Beautiful priestess, mine, mine only, for ever!
You still are secure. They know not your temple.
They never can find it, or pierce it, or touch it,
Because in their hearts they know no such a temple.
I turn my back on them like Enos the Trojan.
Much indeed leaving in wild desolation,
But bearing one treasure alone that is dearer
Than all they possess or have fiercely torn from me;
A maiden that stands looking far down the valley
Swinging her hat by its long purple ribbons.

NEPENTHE.

'Our life is two-fold:—'

'Still it lingering haunts the greenest spot
On memory's waste.'

I HAVE a world, a world which is all my own,
Which you, nor foe, nor friend, nor kith, nor kin,
Nor even my own fiery soul, when churlish grown,
Has entered, or shall ever pass therein;
But when all of care and strife aside are thrown
And I am free, then I am there, and am not alone.

No, not alone, for standing there inviting me
On the threshold is God's image made of pearl,
And I relieve the elden time with that purity—
There with a queenly shrined and sainted girl,
I press the green beneath the ancient tree,
And vow the vows and redream the mystery.

What though the real did happen years ago!
  What though our lives are wide, and still diverge?
And both of us are wed? Admit it's so.
  Then sitting here to-night, will you, sir, urge
We dare not live that past in all its glorious glow?
Well! you may be good, but there are things you do not
    know.

To-day I fight the manly pitted fight of life,
  I give back deftly hard dealt blow for blow,
To-day is she the mother and the patient wife,
  Taking life a fact from fates that made it so;
But lo! to-night I quit the struggling strife,
She is young again, heart-full, and lips are rife.

The long tilled turf is rich again and green—
  The long felled oak extends its hugest bough,
And we are there as lang syne we have been,
  Giving troth for troth, and plighting vow for vow—
Holy vows for aye upon that belted green,
Where no gray ghosts dare thrust themselves between.

Yet in the morn, amid the reckless rush of life,
  First in the duties and foremost in the scene,
She, the fond mother and most loyal wife—

She the peerless of all that's goodly will be seen ;
And girded, I shall marshal for the strife
Without a thought of the glorious 'might have been.'

And you do star-ward point and bid me twine
The hopes and promise round the crumbling heart.
Well, I have tried, wept and watched to read the sign,
But heaven, my friend,—nay, now, do not start—
But heaven—my heaven at least, is in that sweet lang syne—
There in that world so solely and so completely mine.

UNDER THE OAKS.

OAKS of the voiceless ages!
Precepts! Poems! Pages!
Lessons! Leaves and volumes!
Arches! Pillars! Columns
In the corridors of ages!
Grand patriarchal sages!

Their Druid beards are drifting
And shifting to and fro,
Down to their waists in zephyrs,
That bat-like come and go;
The while the moon is sifting
A sheen of shining snow
On all these blossoms lifting
Their blue eyes from below.

The night has cast his mantle
Down on the day's remains;
For he lies dead before us.
I seen his red blood stains
At twilight drifting o'er us,

And these oaks chant above him
In stately, solemn strains,
For ah! these Druids love him,
That knightly day that's slain,
And they will robe in sable
Till he shall rise again.

I have no tears or sighing,
For he was not kind to me —
This dead day here before us,
O mossy Druid tree
With dark brow bending o'er us!
He was not kind to me,
I will not wail his dying.

No. It is not green leaves rustling
That your hear lisping there,
But bearded, mossy Druids
Counting beads in prayer.
No. Not a night-bird singing,
Nor breeze a green bough swinging:
But that bough holds a censer
And swings it to and fro;
'Tis Sunday eve, remember,
That's why they chant so low.

DIRGE.

THE silver cord loosed,
The golden bowl broken,'
The sunbeam has fallen,
The Saviour has spoken.

The yew and the cypress,
By Lethe's dark tide,
Are sweeping to-day—
A miner has died!

'The white sands have crumbled
Away from his tread,'
By eternity's ocean—
A miner is dead!

His lamp has gone out;
What else can be done
Than lay him to sleep
Till the light of the sun?

Pine slabs! what of it?
Marble is dust,
Cold and as silent—
And iron is rust.

VALE.

TO those who have known my mad life's troubles
I leave these lines—'tis all I have to leave
Save faults and follies; the dreams and bubbles
Of my young life; and O I grieve
In tears of blood I could not worthier weave.

True, 'tis a farewell piece but poorly spoken,
It is an adieu song but harshly sung;
For the heart beats dull and the harp is broken,
And the hand that o'er the keys is flung
Is nerveless now, and the chords unstrung.

The round red sun is set for me for ever,
And nebulous darkness is rolling from afar;
And I stand adown by death's dark river
Calmly and alone, for the thoughts that war
Have died, or dimly burn, as yon sweet star.

'Tis well I stand by the rushing river,
Up to my knees in the blackened tide;
The sounding waters will drown for ever
The critic's jeers and paynim pride,—
And reviews are not ferried to the other side.

So life is but a day of weary fretting
As a sickly babe for its mother gone;
And I fold my hands, only this regretting:
That I have writ no thought, or thing, not one,
That lives, or earns a cross or cryptic stone.

BENONI.

A strophe wove of sylvan warp
And woof of weeds and beaded strouds —
A symphony from shivered harp,
Where sentiment the sense enshrouds ;
But read, before you ruthless carp—
Perchance it has some truth—some good—
Seen like the summit of Mount Hood
When bursting through the rolling clouds.

BENONI.

'The landlady and Tam were gracious
Wi' favours secret, rich and precious.
The souter told his queerest stories,
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus.
The storm without might rear and rustle,
Tam didna mind the storm a whistle.'

—BURNS.

I.

DOWN from the town of Del Renalda,
With only a half-hushed imprecation
On feasts, and priests, and the invitation
Had come the long and lean Alcalde—
And many a priest with shaven pate—
And many a long-tongued advocate—
Sat and sipped with him long and late—
Sat and sipped of the blushing wine,
Crushed from the Occidental vine—
Sipped of the wine of San Diego,
Sipped of the wine of Saint Benito,—
Feasting full in commemoration
Of the Holy Mary's Annunciation.
And they sipped late, and they sat long

In joyous bout and wild wassail,
And many a secret, gushing tale
Was told, and many an amorous song
Shook the adobes till chanticleer
Arousing, echoed their song and cheer.
The wine poured in, the secrets out,
As water poured in drain or spout
Will put the rats and mice to rout—
Poured out secrets of wife and client —
From these wine-brave men defiant—
From all but one, the tall, lean judge;
Few were the quaffs his thin lips passed—
Fewer the words that from them fell;
And even these he did begrudge,
As you might yellow coins that shine
In hands of a brainless Broadway swell,
And looked the while as if to tell
Something of casting pearls to swine.

With lifted cups the judge they pressed,
Careless of host and careless of guest,
And loudly called for a song or tale.
Secrets are sought with ill intent,
And only the evil are insolent.
An advocate, with a tawny skin,

Whose tongue kept constant dong and din—
Cried, 'What! are you a Plantagenet
That leapt full-grown this great world in?
For I swear by the cross I much mistake
If there is a man in Mexico
Who doth a line of your life know
Farther agone than this decade.'
A hand on the rude one's lips was laid.
'Sacred, my son,' the priest went on—
'Sacred the secrets of every one—
Inviolate as an altar-stone.
But what in the life of one who must
Have lived so pure to be so just?—
What can there be, O advocate,
In the life of one so desolate,
Of luck with matron, or love with maid,
Midnight revel or escapade,
To stir the wonder of men at wine?
Surely duller than chant of mine
Told at eve at the vestry door
To sleeping worshippers; ten times o'er.
But should the judge, his honour, though
(And here his voice fell soft and low
As he sat, his wine-horn in its place,
And looked in the judge's care-worn face)

Weave us a tale, that points a moral,
Out of his rich imagination,
Of lass, or love, or lovers' quarrel,
Naught of his fame or name or station
Shall be lessened by its relation.'

Softly the judge sat down his horn—
Kindly he looked on the priests all shorn,
And gazed in the eyes of the advocate
With a touch of pity, but none of hate;
Then looked down into the brimming horn,
Half defiant and half forlorn.

Was it a tear? Was it a sigh?
Was it a glance of the priest's black eye?
Or was it the drunken revel cry
That smote the rock of his frozen heart
And tore his purple lips apart?
Or was it the weakness like to woman
Yearning for sympathy
Through the dark years—
Spurning the secresy,
Burning for tears,
Proving him human?

II.

'It may be where white moonbeams kneel
At night beside some rugged steep;
It may be where mad breakers reel,
Or mild waves cradle men to sleep;
It might have been in peaceful life,
Or mad tumult and storm and strife,
I drew my breath; it matters not.
A silvered head, an humble cot,
A peaceful stream, a balmy clime,
A cloudless sky, a sister's smile,
A mother's love, a church-bells' chime
Are mine—are with me all the while—
Are hung on memory's sounding halls—
Are graven on her glowing walls;
But rage, nor rack, nor wrath of man,
Nor prayer of priest, nor price, nor ban,
Can wring from me their place or name,
Or whence they went, or whence I came.

'Out in the autumn world a waif,
Drifting away like a wayward leaf;
A girlish form and a childish face—
A dead leaf drifting from place to place.

'Where mountains repose in their blueness—
Where the sun first lands in his newness,
To gather his beams and his lances
Ere down to the vale he advances
With vizor erect, and encounters—
The terrible night in his way,
And slays him, and out of his blackness
Hews out the beautiful day
With his flashing sword of silver,
Dwelt I—and dwelt another—
Another?—not myself!—perchance a brother?
Say, is not life twain?
Didst never think of yourself as one
You knew in the dim days agone?

'O for the skies of rolling blue!
For the face as fair as hers you woo!
For the voice like the call of the cockatoo
In vespers calling the soul to bliss,
In the blessèd love of the world above,
Ere it has taken the stains of this.

'Sweet melodies were in the air,
And tame birds carolled everywhere.
I listened to the lisping grove
And cooing pink-eyed turtle-dove,

And, loving with the holiest love—
Believing with a grand belief
That everything beneath the skies
Was beautiful and born to love—
That man had but to love—believe—
And earth would be a Paradise,
As beautiful as that above;
My goddess, Beauty, I adored,
Devoutly—fervid—her alone,
My priestess. Love, unceasing poured
Pure incense on her altar-stone.

'With rays of the red rising sun
I pinned the clouds back from the sky,
And stood like holy priest or nun
With curtains parted left and right—
Before the sacred cross and light—
And lifting my two hands on high
Would call to voices in the air;
Then shade my eyes and shout replies
To holy spirits calling there.
And then again, in tamer mood,
With bended knee and temples bare,
Would look and listen as I stood,
With bowed and reverential air,

As if to some sweet sister's prayer.
The while the world went sternly on,
The dusty-booted passer-by,
With blankets on his broad gray back,
And face behind a masque of beard,
Looked back, nor heard another cry
Than shoutings of a dreaming boy—
Seen nought else but the dappled sky;
Then onward bent his weary track
And thought of ounces, slugs, and leads—
And thought of Maud, and Kate, and May,—
Their mother fair and far away—
And raised his coarse sleeve to his eye.

'And deep down in the cannon's mouth
The long-tom ran and pick-axe rang,
And stringing round the mountain high
Were pack-trains coming from the south
In long gray lines like wild geese fly.
While muleteers shouted hoarse and high,
And dusty, dusky muleteers sang—
Señora with the liquid eye!
No floods can ever quench the flame,
Or Sierra's snow my passion tame,
O Jouana with the coal-black eye!
O señorita, bide a bye!

III.

'Mistaken and misunderstood,
My hot magnetic heart sought round
And craved of all the souls I knew
But one responsive throb or touch—
Or thrill that flashes through and through
Deem you that I demanded much?
Not one congenial soul was found.
I sought a deeper wild and wood.
A girlish form and a childish face—
A wild waif drifting from place to place.
Environed by a mountain wall,
So fierce, so terrible and tall,
It never yet had been defiled
By track or trail; save by the wild,
Free children of the wildest wood—
An unkissed virgin at my feet,
Lay this pure, hallowed, dreamy vale;
Where breathed the essence of my tale.
Lone dimple in the mountain's face—
Lone Eden in a boundless waste,
It lay so beautiful! so sweet!

'There in the sun's decline I stood,
By God's form wrought in pink and pearl—
My peerless, dark-eyed Indian girl—
And gazed with rapt and feasting eyes
Upon an earthly paradise.
Inclining to the south it lay,
And one league southward rolled away,
Until the sable, feathered pines
And tangled boughs and amorous vines
Closed like besiegers on the scene.
The while the stream that intertwined
Had barely room to flow between.
It was unlike all other streams,
Save those seen in sweet summer dreams.
For sleeping in its snowy bed,
Nor rock or stone was ever known—
Only the shining, shifting sands,
Sifted for ever by unseen hands.
It curved, it bent like Indian bow,
And like an arrow darted through,
Yet uttered not a sound or breath;
It was as swift, as still as death,
Yet was so clear, so pure, so sweet,
It wound its way into your heart
As through the grasses at your feet.

'Down through the tall untangled grass
I seen the black bear careless pass,
And caught my rifle to my face;
She chid me with a quiet grace
And said, "Not so, for us the day,
The night belongs to such as they."

'And then from out the shadowed wood,
The antlered deer came stalking down
In half a shot of where I stood;
Then stopped and stamped impatiently—
Then shook his head and antlers high—
And then his keen horns backward threw
Upon his shoulders broad and brown,
And thrust his muzzle in the air—
Snuffed proudly, then a blast he blew
As if to say, the coast is clear.
And then from out the sable wood
His mate and two sweet dappled fawns
Stole forth, and by the monarch stood,
She timid, while the little ones
Would start like aspens in a gale.
Then he, as if to re-assure
The trembling and demure,
Again his antlers backward threw—

Again a blast defiant blew,
Then led them proudly down the vale.

'I watched the forms of darkness come,
Slow stealing from their sylvan home,
And pierce the sunlight drooping low
And weary, as if loth to go,
With long black lances that were made
From giant pine-trees' lengthened shade.
He stained the lances as he bled,
And bleeding, and pursued, he fled
Across the vale into the wood.
I seen the tall grass bend its head
Beneath the stately martial tread
Of the pursuer and pursued.

"Behold the clouds," Winnema said,
"All purple with the blood of day.
The west is gory where he bled:
The night has conquered in the fray,
The shadows live and light is dead."

'She turned to Shasta gracefully,
Around whose hoar and mighty head
Still lay a sea of golden red,

While troops of clouds a space below,
Were drifting wearily and slow,
As seeking shelter for the night,
Like weary sea-birds in their fight;
Then curved her right arm gracefully
Above her brow, and bowed her knee,
And chanted in an unknown tongue
Words sweeter than were ever sung.
And what means this, I gently said;
I spoke to God, the Yopitone
Who sits on yonder snowy throne.
She softly said with drooping head,
I bowed to God. He heard me speak —
I felt his firm breath on my cheek—
He heard me all my wishes tell,
And he is good, and all is well.

'You might have plucked beams from the moon,
Or tore the shadow from the pine
When on its dial track at noon,
But not have parted us an hour
Save by the force of brutal power;
She was so wholly, truly mine.
Our lives were one unbroken dream
Of purest bliss and calm delight—

A flowery-shored untroubled stream —
A full-mooned serenading night.

'Once on a birch down by the way
I carved my name in coarse design,
At which she gazed, as she would say,
What does this say? What is this sign?
And when I gaily said, "Some day
Some one will come and read my name
When you and I have passed away,
And I will live in song and fame,
As he who first found this sweet vale;
And they will give the place my name,
Entwined with many a mountain tale,"
She was most sad, and troubled much,
And looked in silence far away;
Then started trembling from my touch,
And when she turned her face again
I read unutterable pain
And seen the stain of tears.

'Ah! yes; this, too, fulfils my fears.
Yes, they will come — my race must go,
As fades a vernal fall of snow;
And you be known, and I forgot,

Like these brown leaves that rust and rot
Beneath my feet; and it is well;
I do not seek to thrust my name
On those who here, hereafter dwell,
Because I have before them dwelt.
For they will have their tales to tell—
They will ask their time and fame.

'Yes, they will come, come even now—
The dim ghosts on yon mountain's brow—
Gray fathers of our time and race
Do beckon to us from their place,
And hurl red arrows through the air
At night, to bid our braves beware.
A foot-print by the clear McCloud,
Unlike aught ever seen before,
Is seen. The crash of rifles loud
Is heard along its farther shore.

IV.

'The war-yell roused me from repose,
I sprang forth like a frightened deer—
I heard the hot shots sharp and clear,
And shoutings of my friends—or foes—

Upon the crested mountain wall.
I heard the war chief's rallying call
In words of wildest eloquence,
And seen the warriors marshalled all.
'And you?" she cried—an instant—then
I led in the van of the tallest men.
I plunged in the fight with the fiery zeal
That only the young and impulsive feel.
I leapt in the fight with a fierce delight—
I led where the bravest quailed to follow,
And plunging down a dense pine hollow
Was mingled with my flying foes,
And felled, and bound, and borne away,
Their only trophy of the fray.

'They bore me bound for many a day
Through fen and wild, by foamy flood,
From my dear mountains far away,
To where an adobe prison stood,
Beside a sultry, sullen town,
With iron eyes and stony frown;
And in a dark and narrow cell,
So hot it almost took my breath,
And seemed but an outpost of hell,
They thrust me; as if I had been

The fiercest monster ever seen.
I cried aloud, I courted death —
I called unto a strip of sky—
The only thing beyond my cell
That I could see ; but no reply
Came but the echo of my breath.
I paced — how long I cannot tell,
My reason failed, I knew no more,
And swooning, fell upon the floor.

'Then months went on, till deep one night,
When long thin bars of lunar light
Lay shimmering along the floor,
My senses came to me once more.

'My eyes looked full into her eyes—
Into her soul so true and tried.
I thought myself in paradise
And wondered when she too had died.
And then I seen the stripèd light
That struggled past the prison bar,
And in an instant, at the sight,
My sinking soul fell just as far
As could a star
Loosed by a jar

From out the setting in the ring—
The purpled, semi-circled ring
That seems to circle us at night.
She seen my senses had returned,
Then swift to press my pallid face—
Then as if spurned
She sudden turned
Her sweet face to the prison wall;
Her bosom rose—her hot tears fell
Fast, as drip moss-stones in a well,
And then, as if subduing all
In one strong struggle of the soul,
Be what they were of vows or fears,
With kisses and hot scalding tears,
There in that deadly, loathsome place,
She bathed my bleached and bloodless face.
I was so weak I could not speak,
Or press my thin lips to her cheek,
I only looked my wish to share
The secret of her presence there.

'Then looking through her falling hair—
A look of tenderest despair—
Still sadder—so her sweet face still appears
Seen through the tears

And blood of years—
Than burning Sappho bathed in tears,
She pressed her finger to her lips—
Sweeter than sweets the brown bee sips—
Sadder than a grief untold—
Stiller than the milk-white moon,
She turned away, I heard unfold
An iron door, and she was gone.

'If all could die who death invite,
And all could live who seek to live,
'Twere doubtful if the world would give
A life list greater than to-night.

V.

Again I felt the liquid air.
Around my hot brow circling roll
Sweet as my Saint Madonna's prayer,
Or benedictions on the soul.
Pure air, which God gives free to all,
Again I breathed without control—
Pure air, that man would fain enthral—
God's air, which man hath seized and sold
Unto his fellow-man for gold.

'I bowed bown to the bended sky—
I tossed my two thin hands on high—
I called unto the crooked moon—
I shouted to the shining stars,
With breath and rapture uncontrolled,
Like some wild schoolboy loosed at noon,
Or comrade coming from the wars,
Hailing his companeers of old.

'Short time for shouting or delay—
The cock is shrill, the east is gray,
Pursuit is made, I must away.
They cast me on a sinewy steed,
And bid me look to girth and guide,
A caution that is little need.
I dash the iron in his side—
Swift as a shooting-star I ride—
I turn—I see, to my dismay,
A silent rider at my side.
I glance again—it is my bride—
My love—my life—rides at my side.
By gulch and gorge and brake and all,
Swift as the shining meteors fall,
We fly, and never sound or word
But ringing mustang hoofs is heard,

And limbs of steel and lungs of steam
Could not be stronger than theirs seem.
Grandly as some joyous dream,
League on league, and hour on hour,
Far from keen pursuit, or power
Of sheriff, bailiff, high or low,
Into the bristling hills we go.
Into the snowy-haired McCloud,
White as the foldings of a shroud;
We dash into the dashing stream—
We breast the tide—we drop the rein—
We clutch the streaming, tangled mane;
Yet the silent rider at my side
Has never a sound or word replied.
Out in its foam—its snow—its roar—
Breasting away to the farther shore,
Steadily—bravely—gained at last—
Gained—where never a dastard foe
Has dared to come—or friend to go.
Pursuit is baffled and danger passed.

'Under an oak whose wide arms were
Lifting aloft as if in prayer—
Under an oak, where the shining moon
Like feathered snow in winter noon,

Quivered, sifted, and drifted down
Over the dewy, dappled ground;
And yet she was as silent still,
As black stones toppled from the hill—
Great basalt blocks that near us lay—
And I in silence sat on one,
And she stood gazing far away—
Massive, squared, and chiselled stone,
Like columns that had toppled down
From temple dome or tower crown
Along some drifted, silent way
Of desolate and desert town
Built by the children of the sun.
And through the leaves the silver moon
Fell sifting down in silver bars
And played upon her raven hair,
And darted through like shooting-stars
That dance through all the night's sweet noon
To echoes of an unseen choir.

'I sought to catch her to my breast
And charm her from her silent mood—
She shrank as if a beam—a breath—
Then silently before me stood—
Still—coldly—as the kiss of death.

Her face was darker than a pall—
Her presence was so grandly tall,
I would have started from the stone
Where I sat gazing up at her,
As from a form to earth unknown,
Had I possessed the power to stir.

"'O touch me not—no more—no more,
'Tis past—and my sweet dream is o'er.
Impure! Impure! Impure!" she cried,
In words so sweetly, weirdly wild—
Like mingling of a rippling tide,
And music on the waters spilled.
"Pollution foul is on my limbs,
And poison lingers on my lips.
My red heart sickens—hot head swims—
I burn unto my finger-tips.
But you are free. Fly! Fly alone.
Yes, you will win another bride—
Will win you name, and place, and power—
And ne'er recall this face—this hour—
Save in some secret, deep regret,
Which I forgive and you'll forget—
In some far clime where nought is known
Of all that you have done or seen,

Or dearly loved, or madly lost,
Or what your life this night has cost.
Your destiny will lead you on
Where opened wide to welcome you
Rich gushing hearts and bosoms are,
And snowy arms, more purely fair,
And breasts—who dare say breasts more true
When all this dear night's deeds are done?

"'They said you had deserted me—
Had rued you of your wood and wild.
I knew—I knew it could not be.
I trusted as a trusting child,
I crossed the bristled mountain high
That curves its rough back to the sky,
I rode the white-maned mountain flood,
And tracked, and tracked the trackless wood.
The good God led me, as before,
And brought me to your prison-door.
I heard you in the midnight call
My name in my own mountain tongue.
And yet you called so feebly wild,
I should ' mistook you for a child,
Had I not known that name and tone
From all that earth has ever known.

"'That maddened call, that fevered moan,
In that sweet mountain tongue and tone,
So thrilled my sympathetic soul,
My senses I could not control.
The keeper with his clinking keys
I sought, implored upon my knees
That I might see you, touch your hand,
Your brow, or speak but one low word
Of comfort in your dying hour.
His red face shone, his redder eyes
Were like the fire of the skies.
He cried, but yield to my demand
And you may hold his maddened head
Until his latest breath is sped.
Again I heard your feeble moan,
I cried, And must he die alone?
I cried unto a heart of stone,
He knew he held me in his power.

'"Ah! why the burning horrors tell?
Enough! I crept into your cell
Polluted, loathed, a hated thing,
An ashen fruit, a poisoned spring.

'"I nursed you, lured you back to life,
And when you woke and called me wife

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And love; with pale lips rife,
With love, and feeble loveliness,
I turned away, I hid my face
In mad reproach and deep distress—
In dust down in that loathsome place.

'"And then I vowed a solemn vow
That you should live—live and be free—
And you have lived—are free, now;
But as for me,
Too slow the red sun comes to see
My life or death, or me again.
O, the peril! The deep pain
I have endured; the dark stain
That I have took on my free soul—
All, all to save you—make you free.—
The foul broad hands that here have pressed,
The drunken lips that mine caressed
Were more than mortal could endure.
But death and fire can make all pure.

'"And yet I have not one regret
For all I suffered, or may yet
Endure or do in this dear night.
Since you have lived and now are free—
Since I have lured you back to life,

And led you safely in your flight.
And now in this, my last adieu —
The last act earth shall know of me —
I ask but this alone of you,
That you believe, ah! know me true —
Know all that I have done, or do
Is done alone for love and you.

"'Behold this finished funeral pyre,
All ready for the form and fire,
Which these, my own hands, did prepare
For this last night; then lay me there.
I would not hide me from my God,
Or the gloom, or grandeur of the place
Beneath the cold and sullen sod,
As if I would conceal my face
In fear or shame for evil done;
Nor in a gloomy bed of clay
Would I with reptiles rot away,
But in a fiery, shining shroud
Ascend to God, a wreathing cloud
At once, and glad as gala day."

'She stopped — she stood — she leaned apace
Her glance and half-regretting face,
As if to yield herself to me,

And then she cried—"It cannot be,
For I have vowed a solemn vow,
O God! help me to keep it now."

'I sprang, with arms extended wide,
To catch her to my burning breast.
She caught a dagger from her side
And plunged it to its silver hilt
Into her hot and bursting heart,
And falling in my arms she cried:
"Yes, you may kiss me now," and died—
Died as my soul to hers was pressed—
Died as I held her to my breast—
Died without one word or moan—
Died without a tear, or tone
Save this, "Yes, you may kiss me now."
Fearfully she had kept her vow.

VI.

'But why the dreary tale prolong,
Since she, its life and light, is gone?
And deem you I confessed me wrong?
That I did bend an oily knee,
O'er all the deep wrongs done to me?
That I, because the prison mould

Was on my brow, and all its chill
Which made my very heart's core cold,
Still quivered in my feeble frame?
Because I burst their earthly hell,
And rose again to life and light,
Did curb my free-born mountain will
And sacrifice my sense of right?
Forget my wrongs? Forget that cell
That rendered me to death and shame?
Did ask them to forgive a youth,
Whose very goddess had been truth,
Until their persecutions came
And set his inmost soul aflame?

'No! and had they come to me that day
While I with hands and garments red
Stood by her pleading, gory clay,
The one lone watcher by my dead,
With cross hilt dagger in my hand
Still dripping red from her heart's core
That gushed my reeking garments o'er—
The every black hound of the land,
Who wore a badge or claimed command,
And offered me my life and all
Of titles, gold, or power, or place—

I should have spat them in the face
And spurned them every one.

'It may be well, wise priest, and good,
In common life, to pardon those
Who have been e'en our deadliest foes,
But there be wrongs that even blood—
Heart's blood cannot efface—
More than death—more than disgrace—
And he who would such things forgive
I deem a cringing, coward slave—
Calling his cowardice—the knave—
Forgiveness and sweet Christian grace.
Poor wretch! too base to live.

'I laid my dead upon the pile,
And standing 'neath the lisping oak
I watched the columns of dark smoke
Embrace her red lips with a smile
Of frenzied fierceness. Then there came
A gleaming column of red flame
And grew a grander monument
Above her nameless noble mould,
Than ever bronze or marble lent
To king or conqueror of old.

'It seized her in its hot embrace
And leapt as if to reach the stars.
Then looking up I seen a face
So saintly and so sweetly fair—
So pitying and so pure—
I near forgot the prison-bars,
And for one instant—one alone—
I felt I could forgive—endure.

'I laid a circlet of white stone,
And left her ashes resting there;
But when had passed one long decade
I stood beneath that scarred oak's shade
And marked the circle of white stone
With tall wild grasses overgrown,
I did expect, I know not why,
From out her sacred dust, to find
Wild pinks and daisies blooming fair;
And when I did not find them there,
I almost deemed her God unkind—
Less careful of her dust than I.

'And when the red shafts of the sun
Came tipping down to where I stood,
I hailed them with a redder one—

A lifted dagger red with blood.
I vowed to dedicate my breath
To vengeance for disgrace and death.
I would not cease upon the fall
Of him who wrought the burning shame
Of her disgrace or my dark name,
No; they should perish one and all.
What! he the base brute—he alone
For such a life as hers atone?
Had all his kind been heaped in one
And offered me to curse or kill,
I might have said, enough is done,
My hate is sated to the fill.

'I knew their names and faces well—
Their numbers—knew where each did dwell—
They would have filled the vaults of hell—
Did fill them to the last degree—
Do fill them still, if what you tell,
Is truth, of faith of Pharisee.

VII.

* * * *

'Go search the annals of the North,
And records there of many a wail,

Of widow and of waiting wife —
Of marshalling and going forth,
For missing sheriffs, and for men
Who never more were known again,
Who disappeared on mountain trail,
Or in some dense and narrow vale.

* * * *

'Go speak to Trinity and Scott,
That curve their dark backs to the sun,
Go ask them all. Lo! have they not
The chronicles of my wild life?—
My secrets on their lips of stone?—
And archives built of human bone?
Go court their wilds as I have done,
From snowy crests to sleeping vales,
And you will find on every one
Enough to swell a thousand tales.

* * * *

'The soul cannot survive alone,
And hate will die, like other things—
I felt an ebbing in my rage—
I hungered for the sound of one—
Just one familiar word.—

Yearned but to hear my fellow speak,
Or sound of woman's mellow tone,
As beats the wild imprisoned bird,
That long nor kind, nor mate has heard,
With bleeding wings
And panting beak
Against its iron cage.

'Far, far below, at shut of day,
A-glinting in the tinted ray,
I seen a low-roofed cottage lay—
Seen children sporting to and fro—
The busy housewife come and go,
And white cows come at her command,
And none looked larger than my hand.
The sight I could no more withstand,
But worn and torn, and tanned and brown,
Heedless of all, I hastened down.
A wanderer wandering long and late,
I stood before the rustic gate.

'Two little girls, with brown feet bare,
And tangled, tossing, yellow hair,
Played on the long thick coat of green
Around a great Newfoundland brute,

That lay half resting on his breast,
And with his red mouth opened wide,
Would make believe that he would bite,
As they assailed him left and right,
And then sprang to the other side,
And filled with shouts the willing air.
O sweeter far than lyre or lute
To my then parched and thirsty heart,
And better self, so wholly mute,
Were those sweet voices calling there.
Though some sweet scenes my life has seen—
Some melody my soul has heard—
No song of nymph—or maid—or bird,
Or gorgeous, melting, tropic scene,
Has my imprisoned soul so stirred,
Or thrilled my every part—
Or filled me with such sweet delight,
As those young angels sporting there.

'The dog arose at sight of me,
And with a noble dignity
Stood by the children now so still,
And staring at me with a will.
"Come in, come in," the farmer cried,
As busily the housewife hied,

And here a top—a doll—a chair
She placed in order and repair—
"Sit down, sit down, you travelled late.
What news of politics or war?
And are you tired? go you far?
And where ' you from? Be quick, my Kate,
This man is sure in need of food."
The little children close by stood,
And watched and gazed inquiringly,
Then came and climbed upon my knee.

'"That there's my ma," the youngest said;
And laughed and tossed her pretty head,
And then, half bating of her joy—
"Have you a ma? you stranger boy?
Have you, like me, a pretty home?
A pretty doll, and top, or toy?
Where do you live? and whither roam?
And where's your pa, poor stranger boy?"

'I ate with thanks the frugal food—
The first returned for many a day.
I sought my couch, but not to sleep,
New thoughts were coursing strong and deep
In my impulsive, passion heart.

I had met kindness by the way—
I had at last encountered good.

'I lay and pictured me a life
Afar from cold reproach or stain,
Or annals dark of blood and strife—
From deadly perils or heart pain,
And ere the breaking of the morn
I hung my arms upon the horn,
And such sweet thoughts and pictures bore
Instead. And from that cottage-door
I passed to other scenes and lands
With lightened heart and whitened hands.

VIII.

'I had traversed the world of woe.
My boy-life had seen more of tears—
Had felt more deep enduring pain—
More desolate and deadly pain,
Than tempered man can ever know,
Though they should live a thousand years.

'Another place—pursuit—and friends—
I sought to make the world amends.
Never was Christian more devout,
Never was lowlier heart than mine,
Never has pious Moslem yet

When bearded Muezza's holy shout
Echoed afar from minaret,
Knelt lowlier down to saint or shrine,
Than knelt that penitent heart of mine
In humblest prayer for grace divine.
And fortune, friends, and fame, and name,
Were coming surely to be mine,
Instead, reproach, pursuit, and shame;
And I do know unto this hour,
If it was in the Eternal power
To crush me, or to make them less,
'Twas not for want of thankfulness.

''Twas by some chance I chanced to meet
Some strangers on the thronging street
Who stopped, and stared, and glared at me—
Then passed—repassed—then glared again.
I heard them mutter, "Yes, 'tis he!"

'Death hath not a darker night—
Hell hath not a hotter flame
Or deadlier blight
Than half-hid whisperings of shame.
What could I do? I knew my sin.
Fly as I had fled before?

The heart shoots tendrils like a vine
If all is warm and well within,
And they will clasp and intertwine
With all that's beautiful and pure
When planted 'neath a genial sun.

'An exile! Can the heart endure
To be thus torn from loved and pure?—
To drift out on life's lonely brine?
It can be done. It can endure,
And die, as dies a tender vine
When torn from all its tendrils twine.

'Humblest penitent never yet
Bowed him down in such deep regret.
I bowed for days in the deepest shame,
And then a courage, as from above,
Into my soul-sick spirit came
Breathing a calm; and the holiest love
Was mine; and rising renewed, I said:
Can men not pardon one man's fall
Since Christ so willingly pardons all?
Will the world not welcome one penitent
Again to the walks of good intent,
Since heaven so gladly welcomes all?

I will live—I will teach by word and deed
That man may fall from the laws and creed—
May fall as far as the angels fell,
Hurled from heaven to the depths of hell,
And yet, when tears of penance flow,
Be washed as fair as the falling snow.
I will prove to the world that it may be done
And open the door to many a one—
Fair frail daughter and faltering son—
Waiting, weeping at the cold world's door—
Yearning to be welcomed back once more.
I will bear their taunts—I will bow in tears—
In dust and ashes for years and years,
Typing from Him of humblest birth,
I will meet reproach with the lowliest love,
And open the door for the fallen on earth,
And open the gates for myself above.

IX.

'Have I not wrought while others slept?
Have I not jeers and insults bore
From cold, coarse men who felt no more,
Than street dogs prowling at your heels?
While others joyed, have I not wept?
And felt all that a convict feels

Who tugs eternal at his chain
And peers into elysian fields?
O! the dull, dead, endless pain!
Deep in the dust have I not laid
A thin white face all stained in tears,
And in the ashes bowed and prayed
In sackcloth; lo! for years and years?
It was too much. Across my brow
Grew lines, as furrowed by a plow.
I fancied I could see a trace
Of prison mould upon my face,
And thought the grief-worn facial scars
Resembled my cold prison bars.
I thought each low uncertain word
A taunt at me spoke loud and plain—
I fancied each new voice I heard
Recalled me to my cell again.
At night I started from my sleep,
From sounds as of a sullen chain,
And felt the prison coldness creep
Like icicles through every vein.

'Some things must pass on unexplained—
The lead lie grinding in the core—
The iron rusting in the soul—
Corroding—eating—evermore,

And you must bear and yet be still—
Though it be eating in to kill—
Like old Prometheus chained.

'At last, when I had borne for years
Ten thousand more than here is told,
One day a dog with flippant jeers
Asked me, what of the prison mould,
And half the town did cheer him on.
They cheered—they thought him grand and brave,
They shouted me a coward knave.
It was too much—with one fierce thrust
I stretched him dying in the dust,
And drove the taunting crowd before
Like chaff along a threshing-floor.

'With one stroke I had cut the cord
That bound me to that place abhorred,
And nought was left me but to fly.
Where orange-blossoms never die—
Where red fruits ripen all the year,
Beneath a sweet and balmy sky.
Far from my language or my land—
Reproach or love—or shame or fear—
I swiftly fled—I wandered here—
Yes, here—and this red, bony hand

That holds this glass of ruddy cheer—'
'Tis he,' cried the tawny advocate,
His red eye snapping with hope and hate—
In a voice as shrill as a cock, and as loud—
'Tis the renegade of the cold McCloud,
Seize him—O haste you—hold him fast—
Vengeance is sweet—it is mine at last.'

Slowly the alcalde rose and spoke,
As the advocate quailed 'neath his glare,
'Hand me—touch me—he who dare—'
And his heavy glass on the board of oak
He smote with such an almighty stroke,
It ground to dust in his bony hand,
And heavy bottles did clink and tip
As if an earthquake was in the land.
He towered up, and in his ire
Seemed taller than a church's spire.
He gazed a moment, and then, the while
An icy cold and defiant smile
Did curve his thin and his livid lip,
He turned on his heel—he strode through the hall,
Grand as a god—so grandly tall,
He passed him out through the yielding door
Into the night, and he passed alone,
And never was seen or heard of more.

ULTIME.

'Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep where fame's proud temple shines afar?
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Has felt the influence of a malignant star,
And waged with fortune an eternal war;
Checked by the scoff of pride, by envy's frown,
And poverty's unconquerable bar,
In life's low vale remote has pined alone,
Then drooped into the grave, unpitied and unknown?'

—BEATTIE'S *Minstrel.*

THEY tell me, ere the maple-leaves grow brown once more,
And the wild deer don their great overcoats of gray,
That I must cross the stony threshold of death's door,
And leave this body like a pair of overalls worn a day
Outside the hall, or hung on some nail out of the way.
It seems odd, and yet I think, yea do know, I do feel
As little fear as any trodden dust, or dull cold clay,
To hear my Doc., Death's clerk, and attorney for my weal,
Say I am convicted and that there is no appeal.

Yet, while I have no fear, I feel a touch of deep regret—
Regrets that burn like red-hot iron in the soul,
That my day is but begun as my sun is set.

But there was that in my young life I could not control.
And now, to-night, as recollections o'er me roll,
I know no time that I loitered by the way;
But with a proud eye fixed on a lofty goal,
Pressed on, nor stopped, or turned aside a single day
To rest, or toy with aught that in my rough route lay.

And yet one time, but one, I do remember well,
My life's way lay by oaks, and talking streams, and flowers;
And there were birds, and singing bees, and a holy spell
Of dreamy wonder in the air and hallowed hours;
And from afar fair maids did beckon from their bowers.
I looked and loved. But lo! the leprous stain
Of penury, that so much of life's sweetness sours,
Was mine, and I pushed on in peril and deep pain,
Saying, Sweet scenes, when fame is mine we meet again.

Toiling for ever, chasing a phantom hope to earn
A place with men of mind and a moment's peace;
With the fevered soul on fire with thoughts that burn;
And revelling in rainbow beauties that I could not seize,
Or subdue, or reduce to shape or words; and these
Did unfit me for the stormy struggle with the real.
Vibrating like some insect pendent in the breeze

Between these varied visions and my worldly weal
I have gained neither the real nor the sweet ideal.

Quoting Seneca, who wrote on his desk of gold:
  Dear sir! what is the use of wealth? you naively say.
Sir! in your life's craft with its well-stocked hold,
  Your money is the white oak planks that lay
  Between you and the howling waves; these away,
And you are in the sea without friends or a pretence,
  Then keep your head above the water if you may.
Besides, the days of Diogenes are over now, and hence
  Philosophers in tubs are kept at the State's expense.

* * * *

None have known me, nor have I myself the least part known
  Until prisoned here by him of the sable shore
Till he can transport me to quarters of his own.
  Here I have reflected and ran my fierce life o'er.
  Ah! truly, much indeed have I to deplore,
Yet not one single act of malicious ill.
  I meant well in all. Who could have done more?
And have I not tamed my hot and imperious will?
Have I not made my impulsive heart be still? so still!

Why have I been pursued in this small, low way;
  Why have I been crossed in my every honest aim;
From my childhood on, even down to this dark day?
  I claimed not much of men, and less, far less, of fame.
  Was it because I could not, or that I would not, tame
And tone my cloud-born soul in suppliance to bow
  Me down to dolts, and knaves, and clowns, that did proclaim
Them wise, and great, and good? Ah! even yet I trow
My spirit lives. I would not, could not, I will not now.

'Know thyself!' What had I to do with strife and war?
  I smote, then held him to my heart and wept until he died.
And did I fear? this deep facial arrow's scar,
  And a list of lesser ones have aye the thought belied,
  And yet I do remember me I have turned aside
To avoid the hart I had sought the whole day long.
  And why in stormy courts have I so zealous plied,
And plead, dark-browed, and hurled invective strong,
Then wept at night to think I might have done some wrong?

'Know thyself!' Had I known less of strife and flint-like men—

Had I been content to live on the leafy borders of the scene
Communing with the neglected dwellers of the the fern-grown glen,
And glorious storm-stained peaks, with cloud-knit sheen,
And sullen iron brows, and belts of boundless green,
A peaceful, flowery path, content, I might have trod,
And carolled melodies that perchance might have been
Read with love and a sweet delight. But I kiss the rod.
I have done as best I knew. The rest is with my God.

Come forward here to me, ye who have a fear of death,
Come down, far down, even to the dark waves' rim,
And take my hand, and feel my calm, low breath
How peaceful all! How still and sweet! The sight is dim,
And dreamy as a distant sea. And melodies do swim
Around us here as a far-off vesper's holy hymn.
This is death. With folded hands I wait and welcome him;
And yet a few, so few, were kind, I would live and be known,
That their sweet deeds might be bread on the waters thrown.

I go, I know not where, but know I will not die,
  And know I will be gainer going to that somewhere;
For in that hereafter, afar beyond the bended sky,
  Bread and butter will not figure in the bill of fare,
  Nor will the soul be judged by what the flesh may wear.
But with all my time my own, once in the dapple skies,
  I will collect my fancies now floating in the air
And arrange them, a jewel set, that in a show-case lies
And when you come will show you them in a sweet surprise.

It was my boy-ambition to be read beyond the brine,
  But this you know was when life looked fair and tall,
Erewhile this occidental rim was my dream's confine,
  And now at last I make no claim to be read at all,
  And write with this wild hope, and e'en that is small,
That when the last pick-axe lies rusting in the ravine,
  And its green bent hill-sides echo the shepherd's call,
Some curious wight will thumb this through, saying, 'Well, I ween
He was not a poet, but yet, and yet, he might have been.'

Above all on this green earth a grumbler I do despise,
  Pouring o'er all a sea of tears and untimely groans,

As if he alone had stood upon the bridge of sighs;
And yet I wail. But mind you my murmurs and low moans,
(Not heard till I am gone) are not of you, or Smith, or Jones,
But fate. Good folks. The world the best I ever trod.
Yet lapidaries tell of flaws in the fairest stones,
And maybe after all, my crosses, my losses, and the rod,
Are but rounds in a ladder leading me thus soon to God.

But to conclude. Do not stick me down in the cold wet mud,
As if I wished to hide, or was ashamed of what I had done,
Or my friends wanted to plant me like an Irish spud.
No, when this the first short quarter of my life is run,
Let me ascend in clouds of smoke up to the sun.
And as for these lines, they are a rough, wild-wood boquet,
Plucked from my mountains in the dusk of life, as one
Without taste or time to select, or put in good array,
Grasps at once rose, leaf, briar, on the brink, and hastes away.

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